

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 5917

STUTTGART FOR ELG

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION JULY 6: PALESTINAIN RIPOSTE TO TELL

ZAATAR DEFEAT COMES IN NORTH; DIPLOMATIC SURPRISES

REF: BEIRUT 5872

1. SUMMARY: PALESTINIAN FORCES HAVE BEGUN MAJOR OFFENSIVE AGAINST NORTHERN FRINGES OF "CHRISTIANLAND" IN VICINITY OF CHEKKA, WITH INITIAL SUCCESSES. STILL NO END TO TELL ZAATAR FIGHTING. RED CROSS EFFORT TO REMOVE WOUNDED FAILS. OTHER FRONTS RELATIVELY STABLE ALTHOUGH ARTILLERY AND GROUND ACTIONS IN MOST AREAS. SECOND SOFAR MEETING CANCELLED DUE TO NEW SITUATION IN NORTH, AND RIAD HAS NOT RETURNED. HOWEVER, LIBYAN PRIME MINISTER JALLOUDD HAS REAPPEARED IN WEST BEIRUT, BEARING SYRIAN PROPOSITIONS TO PALESTINIANS. ARAFAT CONTINUES MEETINGS FOLLOWING RETURN TO COUNTRY. RAYMOND EDDE WARNS LAA OF CONSEQUENCES OF CONTINUED CIVILIAN SHORTAGES IN WEST BEIRUT, WHERE PALESTINIAN STEPS TOWARD DE FACTO GOVERNMENT CONTINUE. END SUMMARY.

2. PALESTINIAN AND LEFTIST FORCES REPORTED TO HAVE TAKEN NORTHERNMOST COASTAL CHRISTIAN TOWN OF CHEKKA SOUTH OF

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TRIPOLI AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES OF RAS EL NOURYE, HAMATE,

BAB EL-HAWA AND WAJH EL-HAJAR. ATTACK BEGAN AT DAWN JULY 5 FOLLOWING HEAVY BOMBARDMENT OF TOWN AND INCLUDED USE OF TANKS AND SOME LANDINGS BY SEA. PALESTINIAN/LEFTIST INTENTIONS IN AREA NOT CLEAR, BUT THEY OBVIOUSLY IN BLOODY MOOD AFTER TELL ZAATAR. OPERATION IS RETALIATION FOR TELL ZAATAR, BUT FOLLOWS WEEKS OF SPORADIC VIOLENCE IN KOURA REGION. CHEKKA IS ASTRIDE CHRISTIAN ZONE ACCESS ROAD TO EMBROILED INLAND CITY OF ZGHORTA, HOMETOWN OF FRANGIE. LEFTISTS CLAIM THEY SIX KILOMETERS FROM FRANGIE'S RADIO AMCHIT.)PHALANGE CLAIMS UNDERTOOK COUNTEROFFENSIVE BEGINNING LATE JULY 5. EARLY JULY 5 RADIO AMCHIT CLAIMS ATTACKING FORCES NOW CAUGHT IN PINCHER BETWEEN CHRISTIAN FORCES BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH OF CHEKKA. RIGHTISTS SAY LEFTISTS ALSO ATTEMPTED OCCUPY BATROUN AND THAT ATTACK IS ATTEMPT TO ABORT ARATLO
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SSION AND BRING
FAILURE TO PEACE EFFORTS OF SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM. OTHER NORTHERN AREAS VERY ACTIVE WITH BOMBARDMENTS AT TRIPOLI/ ZGHORTA AND CLASHES REPORTED AT ALMA, BSEMA, MYRIATA, ARDE, RACHIINE, MAJDLAYA AND KOBBEH. WE HAVE INDICATIONS PHALANGE HAS BEGUN REDEPLOY SOME TROOPS NORTHWARD FROM BEIRUT AREA.

3. BRAMA OF TELL ZAATAR CONTINUES TO UNFOLD IN CONTRADICTORY SCENARIOS FOLLOWING REPORTED SURRENDER OF SOME DEFENDERS ON JULY 4. GUARDIANS OF CEDARS AND OTHER RIGHTIST SOURCES CLAIM TOTAL CONTROL OF CAMP, BUT PRESS REPORTS CONTINUING ARTILLERY BARRAGES ON TELL ZAATAR AND SOME HAND-TO-HAND FIGHTING IN VICINITY. TRUTH MAY LIE IN LONG STANDING RIGHTIST CLAIM THAT PALESTINIANS HAD TRANSFORMED TELL ZAATAR INTO ANTHILL OF SUBTERRANEAN FORTIFICATIONS. RIGHTISTS MAY ALSO BE SEEKING MINIMIZE CASUALTIES AND ADVERSE POLITICAL FALLOUT WHILE REGARDING FALL OF CAMP NOW AS INEVITABLE. DIVERSION SOME RIGHTIST FORCES TO NORTH IS NEW FACTOR IN EQUATION. ICRC CONVOY OF 20 VEHICLES ATTEMPTING PICK UP WOUNDED AND POSSIBLY ALSO PRISONERS (VCHAMOUN CLAIMS 300) FROM TELL ZAATAR TURNED BACK JULY 5 AT JISR EL-BACHA. NOT CLEAR IF CONVOY WAS ATTACKED OR SIMPLY FOUND AREA TOO ACTIVE. EACH SIDE ACCUSES OTHER OF IMPEDING MERCY OPERATIONS. IN SAME VICINITY, PALESTINIAN CANNON AND MISSILE FIRE REPORTEDLY FROM CAMP ITSELF
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CONTINUES TO RAIN ON SIN EL-FIL, DEKOUANE, MKALLES, HORCH TABET AND NEIGHBORING AREAS FROM WELL DUG IN GUN EMPLACEMENTS. PRESS REPORTS SOME "SUICIDE SORTIES." GUARDIANS OF CEDARS REJECT ALL MEDIATION OFFERS AND ARE ADVANCING ON RAS DEKOUANE WHERE THEY CLAIM PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS HAVE TAKEN REFUGE.

4. OTHER VIOLENCE IN BEIRUT AREA INCLUDED HEAVY USE ARTILLERY ALONG CENTRAL CITY CONFRONTATION LINE AND

BOMBARDMENTS OF RESIDENTIAL SECTORS BOTH EAST AND WEST, ALTHOUGH RAS BEIRUT LARGELY SPARED. VIOLENCE CONTINUES AT CHIYAH/AIN EL RUMMANEH AND SEVERAL INFILTRATION ATTEMPTS SAID REPULSED. SOUTH OF CITY, SITUATION AT HADATH/LAYLAKE/KFARCHIMA/SAHRAT CHOUEIFAT REMAINS UNCHANGED WITH PRESS COMMENTING THAT "ENTIRE KNOWN ARSENAL IS IN USE." SPORADIC FIRING RESULTED IN SEVERAL DEATHS JULY 5 AT MTEYN, MROUJE, BOIS DE BOULOGNE, AND AINTOURA.

5. ELSEWHERE IN COUNTRY, ALEY AND KAHALE REMAIN VERY ACTIVE WITH VARIOUS OFFENSIVES AND COUNTER OFFENSIVES. BEKAA SITUATION UNCHANGED, WITH SYRIANS BLOCKADING BAALBEK AND HERMEL IN APPARENT ATTEMPT INDUCE POPULACE TO ACCEPT SYRIAN CONTROL. SOUTH SAW CLASHES JULY 5 BETWEEN SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS ON SIDON/JEZZINE AXIS. ACTION SEEN AS SIGNAL THAT SYRIANS COULD BE PLANNING RETURN IN FORCE TO SIDON TO GAIN CONTROL OF PORT. LEBANESE ARAB ARMY SOUTHERN REGION CHIEF, MAJOR BOUTARI, ACCUSES SYRIANS OF BLOCKADING SHIPACCESS TO PORT BY FIRE. SIDON FORCES REPORTEDLY HAVE MINED LIKELY SYRIAN APPROACH ROUTES.

6. PRESS APTLY DESCRIBES JULY 5 AS DAY OF SURPRISES IN DIPLOMATIC FIELD. AL SEC GEN MAHOUD RIAD RETURNED TO DAMASCUS AND ANNOUNCED CANCELLATION OF ALL-PARTY SOFAR MEETING SCHEDULED FOR JULY

5. HE MAY RETURN TO CAIRO TO REPORT TO AL HEADQUARTERS. AL DEPUTY KHOLI REPORTEDLY INDICATED LAL WILL SEEK DO SOMETHING ABOUT PALESTINIAN OFFENSIVE IN NORTH. SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM ENDED UP IN MOSCOW INSTEAD OF SOFAR AND LIBYAN PREMIER JALLOUD RETURNED JULY 5 TO WEST BEIRUT, WHERE HE MET ARAFAT AND KHATIB, INSTEAD OF LIBYA. HE SCHEDULED MEET OTHERS JULY 6 AS WELL. LIBYAN PREMIER IS NOW PERSONA NON GRATA WITH CHRISTIANS FOLLOWING RECENT CONFIDENTIAL

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STATEMENTS IN WHICH HE CLEARLY SIDED WITH LEFT. NEW PEACE PLAN WHICH AS SAFIR SAYS JALLOUD CARRIED FROM DAMASCUS INCLUDES FOUR OLD POINTS OF: 1) REOPENING OF SAIQA OFFICES IN BEIRUT AND ELSEWHERE; 2) BEGINNING OF POLITICAL DIALOGUE ON HIGHEST LEVEL; 3) SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON; AND 4) IMPLEMENTATION OF A LEBANESE RIGHT-LEFT AGREEMENT, INCLUDING FRANGIE RESIGNATION. JALLOUD REPORTEDLY SAID SYRIANS WOULD WITHDRAW IN RETURN FOR SAIQA REESTABLISHMENT. PLO REPORTEDLY AGREEABLE, PROVIDED RECONSTITUTED SAIQA WILL HAVE NO SYRIAN OFFICERS. NO HOPE FOR IMMEDIATE POLITICAL BREAKTHROUGH FORESEEN BY ANYONE AND AL EFFORTS MAY HAVE RECEIVED ADDITIONAL BLOW IF UNCONFIRMED CLASH BETWEEN LIBYAN AND SUDANESE AL CONTINGENTS AT BEIRUT AIRPORT PROVES TRUE. RADIO AMCHIT CARRIED REPORT AND SAID CONFLICT FOLLOWED KHARTOUM ACCUSATION THAT TRIPOLI HAD SUPPORTED LAST WEEK'S COUP

ATTEMPT AGAINST NUMEIRY. ARAFAT ALSO MET JUNBLATT AND SAEB
SALAM JULY 5. SPOKESMAN FOR LEFTIST MOVEMENT PROFESSES
SURPRISE AND DISAPPOINTMENT AT KUWAIT ASSEMBLY REFUSAL
APPROPRIATE \$30 MILLION TO AID LEBANESE LEFT.

7. BEIRUT CONTINUES SUFFER SHORTAGES AND IN SOME CASES
TOTAL ABSENCE OF ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES AND SERVICES. DIRECTOR
OF ELECTRICITY FOUAD BIZRI ANNOUNCES DECISION TO PURCHASE
OIL FROM RUMANIA IN ORDER GET ZOUK ELECTRICITY CENTER BACK
IN OPERATION. HIGH TENSION WIRES FROM ZOUK DO NOT PASS
THROUGH TELL ZAATAR BATTLEFIELD. NEW CENTER COULD SUPPLY
BEIRUT WITH 35 PERCENT OF ELECTRICITY NEEDS IF HIGH TENSION
WIRES UNDAMAGED. HOWEVER, RUMANIAN FUEL WILL TAKE SOME TEN
DAYS TO DELIVER. RAYMOND EDDE HAS ADDRESSED PUBLIC QUERY
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ON SUPPLY SHORTAGES TO LEBANESE ARAB ARMY, SAYING PUBLIC
OPINION WILL TURN AGAINST LAA IF IT DOES NOT DO SOMETHING
ABOUT CONTINUING DETERIORATION OF LIVING CONDITIONS IN
BEIRUT. PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS IN WEST BEIRUT TAKING OVER
TELEPHONE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS, FLOUR DISTRIBUTION, AND
HAVE DIRECTED BANKS TO FURNISH STATEMENTS OF THEIR BALANCES.
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